

Oslerization of Army and Navy the Next Step

Oslerization of the army and navy is recommended by the President and emphatically urged by the secretaries of war and of the navy.

"Age of elimination" is the official designation of the process, and it is designed to weed out undesirable officers from the present retirement laws and to "black Angel" working together, to most eliminating them. Line officers are not, in the ordinary course of promotion, becoming generals and admirals early enough in life to give them enough experience in commanding troops or fleets before they must retire.

The average officer should become a captain when four years, a major when seven years, a lieutenant colonel when ten years, and a colonel when fifteen years, and the ages at which he now reaches those grades. So argues the secretary of war. In other words, he wants the average officer to become a captain at thirty-four instead of thirty-eight, as at present. He also wishes the average officer to become a major at forty-four, instead of at fifty-one, as now; a lieutenant colonel at fifty, instead of at fifty-seven, and a colonel at fifty-four, instead of at fifty-nine, the age when that rank is reached under existing conditions.

The navy wants a proportionate sifting out, for Secretary Meyer finds that our average rear-admiral is over seven and a half years older than the average British, is seven and two-thirds years older than the average German and nearly eight and a half years older than the average Japanese flag officer of equal rank. Indeed, this disparity in the ages of our naval officers and those of foreign governments was noticed during the recent circumnavigation of the globe by our fleet, and especially was this seen in Yokohama, where there were three vice admirals aged, respectively, fifty-six, fifty-four and fifty, whereas the average age of our rear-admirals on the cruise was about sixty, or fourteen years older than the Japanese rear-admiral present.

To learn the average age at which the world's greatest military leaders have been at their best I searched through the war department library the other day and came upon General King's "Famous and Decisive Battles." As only a military man could he analyze the world's most notable and important conflicts, from Marathon down through ancient, medieval and modern times. After cataloging the commanders at these battles I have, at considerable labor, ascertained as far as possible their ages at the time of these conflicts, and from these data I have made some computations as to the relative ages of the conquerors and the conquered.

The younger commander has defeated the older commander in over four-fifths of the great battles of the world. This deduction is based upon statistics of twenty-nine of the battles on General King's list—all of those where the dates of the principal participants could be obtained.

The average conqueror defeated a man twelve years older than himself. The average conqueror has been forty-three years old, while the average commander on the unsuccessful side has been fifty-five. In other words, the average field commander would seem to be at his best at forty-three.

Alexander the Great was, however, but twenty-five when he defeated Darius at Arbela, Mohammed II, but twenty-three when he conquered Constantinople, Octavius only twenty-one when he and Marc Antony beat Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, and Bernhard but twenty-eight when he vanquished Wallenstein at Lutzen.

At thirty-nine William the Conqueror won the battle of Hastings, while de Bouillon was still a year younger when he took Jerusalem. At thirty-seven Gustavus Adolphus won at Lutzen, Peter the Great was victor at Poltava and Napoleon was the conqueror at Jena, while the last named won Austerlitz at thirty-six, the same age at which Napoleon vanquished at Austerlitz.

When thirty-four, Richard III, the Lion Heart, carried Aeneas, Edward III, took Calais, and Sheridan won Five Forks, while Plummer won victory at Cynoshaline, was but thirty-three, which was a year more than Sargis Attreus could boast of when he was the winner at Zama. And Hannibal and



BRIGADIER GENERAL FUNSTON.

Napoleon were each thirty-one when they won their respective victories of Cannae and Marengo.

Washington was just at this average age of conquering generals—forty-three—when appointed commander-in-chief of the Continental army, and Grant was a year younger when made commander of all the Union armies. But Napoleon, by the time he had reached that age, had conquered Europe, had reigned eight years as emperor, had divorced Josephine and been married two years to Maria Louisa.

Caesar became ruler of Rome three years before arriving at this age of forty-three and his military reputation had long been made; while Alexander the Great, before he was within ten years of this average, had conquered the world and been vanquished by the last enemy which overtook him. He died at thirty-three, which is five years less than the average age when lieutenants become captains in our army. Indeed, Caesar passed out before he had arrived at the age when our majors become lieutenant-colonels, while Napoleon died at about the age when our captains become majors.

Our average American officer now has still eight years to serve as a captain by the time he reaches this average age of history's great victors. Even under the proposed Oslerization scheme, he would yet have one year to serve as a captain before reaching this age.

Now, as to the modus operandi of the Oslerization scheme proposed by the army:

In the first place, the physical examinations under existing law will be extended to officers in the field grades, and each who is found to have an "incapacity" that has "resulted from his own misconduct" shall be honorably discharged with one year's pay only, instead of being retired on three-quarters pay for the rest of his life. And even those who pass this examination will be confronted at various successive periods with graver possibilities of elimination at special retirement rates, depending upon length of previous service.

Every year there will be Oslerized about thirty-eight lieutenants, forty-four captains, fourteen majors, six lieutenant-colonels and three colonels of the line. The staff is not to be affected by the new process.

The hundred and more delinquents are to be selected for Oslerization in this way: At the end of each year the roster of infantry, cavalry and artillery officers will be gone over, and if at least one-sixth of the colonels, one-tenth of the lieutenant colonels, one-twentieth of the majors, one-eighth of the captains and one-fourth of the first lieutenants have not died old, retired or been discharged, then a special retirement board shall be convened by the secretary of

war to Oslerize enough officers of each of these ranks to leave the vacancies required. And there is a safety valve which prevents too rapid promotion. Thus an officer who has been lieutenant colonel less than three years cannot become a colonel unless his total commissioned service exceeds twenty-eight years; nor can majors, captains, first lieutenants and second lieutenants be promoted until their commissioned service totals, respectively, twenty-five, eighteen, ten and four years.

Retired pay for the Oslerized will not be at the present flat rate of three-fourths. It will be arranged on a sliding scale that slides faster and faster the older the Oslerized man has grown in the service. But if he has served less than ten years he is given a cold "one year's pay" and is told to ask no more. If he has served one year over this limit, or eleven, and is still a second lieutenant, he will get only \$20 a month the rest of his life, while if he has made twelve years and is a captain he will get \$1,120 a year. If a major of twenty-seven years' service he will get \$200 a month, and so on up to thirty years' service, which gives any Oslerized officer the present retirement rate of three-fourths full pay.

Annual Oslerization boards must be composed of five members, all outranking the senior officers examined and all taking oath that they will Oslerize "without partiality, favor or affection." These findings must be in writing, and upon their recommendation the President must transfer the Oslerized to the "unlimited-retired list." A similar sifting-out scheme is being devised for the navy.

Heretofore young blood has been infused into our body of admirals and generals only by jumping subordinate officers far over the heads of their elders. Thus Rear Admiral Richard Wainwright was advanced ten numbers for his services at Santiago with the result that he was one of the few naval officers who have lately arrived at flag rank young enough to obtain anything like adequate training as rear-admiral before reaching retiring age. And this advance led to his selection, under the recent reorganization, as "aid for operation and management of fleet," the most responsible detail now to be given to a naval officer. In contrast with his case is that of Captain Milton, who became an admiral in January and who will retire in October next, and who will thus enjoy only ten months of flag rank because he is a victim of stagnation.

In the army the notable cases where young blood has been infused into the higher grades are those of Leonard Wood, J. Franklin Bell, Fred Funston and John Pershing. Maj. Gen. Wood, who has just become the ranking officer of the army, while still in his forties, was colonel of the "Rough Riders" when Roosevelt was their lieutenant colonel and although only an assistant surgeon when the rank of captain when the Spanish war broke out became a major general of volunteers within seven months, a brigadier general of regulars in less than three years and a major general of regulars in a little more than five years, or when forty-two years old. He will be at the head of the army until his retirement in 1924 unless some unforeseen event leads to the promotion of some officer below him to the rank of lieutenant general. Had he not been advanced over the heads of scores of his one-time superiors, Maj. Gen. F. D. Grant, son of President Grant, and Gen. Wood's senior by ten years, would now be the ranking officer of the army. As it is he must retire in 1914, he ten years before Gen. Wood goes out. Maj. Gen. J. Franklin Bell, who ranks just after Maj. Gen. Grant, is likewise nine years younger than Maj. Gen. Dyer, the officer just below him. He rose from captain to brigadier general in 1901 when forty-five, and after he became major general President Roosevelt made him chief of staff over the heads of senior major generals and lieutenant generals alike. His term as chief of staff will expire in April, when he will be succeeded by Gen. Wood.

Fred Funston, who at only forty-four now heads the list of brigadier generals of the line, and who therefore hopes to become a major general at the retirement of Gen. Dyer, next January, was made brigadier general of regulars when only thirty-five, this as a reward for bravery while only a volunteer officer in the Philippines. As he will not retire until 1919 he will apparently have

eighteen years of active service after becoming major general and under normal conditions should be ranking officer of the army for five years after Gen. Wood's retirement. Pershing was promoted from captain to brigadier general at forty-six for distinguished services while with Kuroki's army at Manchuria, and he is already fifth from the top of the brigadiers' list, where he outranks an officer fourteen years his senior.

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